



PUNCH

OR

THE LONDON CHARIVARI



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Charivaria

"THE most fateful moment in the history of the British Empire has arrived," says a newspaper. It must be borne in mind, however, that it was only the moment after the last and before the next.

HITLER, we read, will not let anybody make up his mind for him about where he will strike in an invasion of this country. Nevertheless, Fleet Street does not give up trying.

Recorded versions of fighting on the Eastern Front are still broadcast to the German people, although it has been noticed lately that they are played with a much softer needle.

Unusual Gardening Hint

"A big purge of that sort is one of the great needs of the time, and we shall not make progress till all this human chloroform has been weeded out and sent to grow potatoes."

Dundee Paper's Leading Article.



"And what of the real HITLER—the man behind the mask?" asks an American writer. So it is a mask!

M.T. Saddles in the Old Corral

"MECHANIZATION OF FAMOUS CAVALRY REGIMENT INCLUDES INTENSIVE MOTOR-CYCLE TRAINING"
Newspaper Headings.

It appears that many tins of sardines are not supplied with the usual key-opener to break off when it has been wound half-way round the tin.

A German radio commentator is named FRITZ HITLER, but he is no relation to the FUEHRER. Naturally enough, he is careful not to overstress this point.



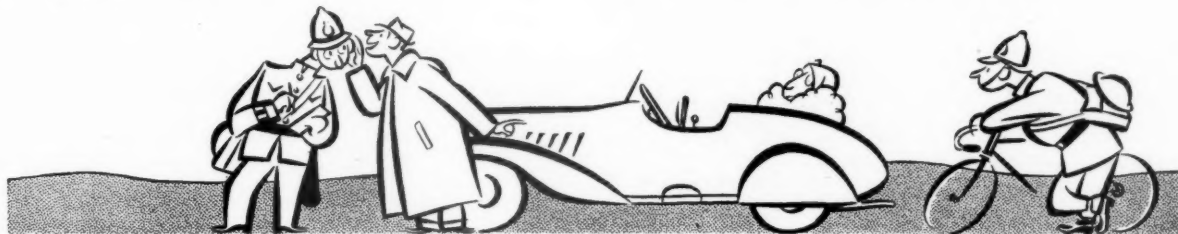
A man recently gave himself up at a police station. It appears that he was about to roll a cigarette in the street when the cigarette-paper blew out of his hand.

"I have actually seen fish form up in a queue," says an ichthyologist. An eel, of course, forms one all by itself.

A former football referee now instructs a thousand men in physical exercises. He wouldn't be human if he did not indulge in a little reprisal heckling.

An American writer reveals that several years ago HITLER took riding lessons but soon gave them up. After all it *must* be tiring to keep the right hand in the air, control the horse with the left and keep standing up in the stirrups at the gallop.

Black market racketeers steal cheep from the Yorkshire moors and transport them by car. Suspicious policemen recently made a handsome apology to a motorist when it was proved beyond doubt that the voluminously-wrapped figure in the back seat *was* his Aunt Emily.



More Leaves from My Litter-Bag

SIR,—It is an old saying in the Army that a man is as bright as his buttons. Let those who deride what they falsely term the "Spit and Polish Brigade" remember that it was pipe-clay which pulled us through the Crimean, the South African and many another war. A clean boot goes a long way towards victory, and the spirit of an Army may well be reflected in the shine of its accoutrements. A housewife is the infantryman's best friend, and not for nothing did a famous Emperor observe on his death-bed that a button-stick would be found at the bottom of every field-marshal's haversack. I subscribe myself unrepentantly

ONE OF THE OLD SCHOOL.

"ECONOMIC FORTRESS" writes: . . . I see it stated that Miss Dorothy Lamour was denied admittance to a munition factory on the grounds that "any good-looking woman walking through the factory costs 1,000 man-hours of labour." Dorothy Lamour might cost us half a bomber." Surely what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, and when so many of our war-time workers are of the fairer but frailer sex, it is all but criminal for good-looking Cabinet Ministers and journalists to hamper production because of their glamorous appeal to the hearts of women workers. I should be glad to compile a list of prominent public men sufficiently devoid of what is often called "oomph" to be allowed to inspect our factories without endangering national output and so playing Hitler's game. . . .

A Scheme for 1942

. . . "Attack, attack and always attack." Is it not clear (says "NICOMACHUS" writing from Belfer) that the determined offensive is the only true art of war? It should be our strategy in the event of a sudden invasion of this country not to resist but to make an equally sudden and simultaneous invasion of Europe at as many points as possible. Even if the final result of this manoeuvre was to place the whole German Army on this side of the Channel and the whole British Army on the other, should we not have gained immensely in prestige and morale, while our material advantage would be at least equal to that of the enemy. The two invading forces should endeavour so far as possible to avoid each other and confine themselves to cutting off each other's supplies at the base. . . .

The Clothes Cut

. . . Sir Thomas Barlow has made one big mistake. In removing our pockets and the turn-ups of our trousers he has forgotten to take away our sleeves. Not only are these unnecessary in summer-time (remarks "MANCUNIAN"), but in a nation girt and eager for toil a positive hindrance to our efficiency. Why remove the coat for work and washing when the mere removal of sleeves would render the labour and loss of time unnecessary? What is more, the mere gesture would prove that we were going on our way honestly and candidly without concealed tricks or hidden laughter, and wearing our hearts in the right place, and not on this absurd portion of our clothing, as our greatest poet has so aptly put it, "for daws to peck at."

Weapons for the Home Guard

DEAR SIR,—Discussions about the value of the pike in modern warfare remind me that my grandfather had a

perfect mediaeval specimen in his armoury at Mould. Unfortunately it was stolen by burglars in 1872, but he often used to describe its appearance when showing guests round the castle, and indicate its length by stretching out his arms to their utmost extent, at the same time saying (humorously) "That was the one that got away."

MARSHMEADOW.

A Tip for Lord Woolton

I HAVE eaten many a black-headed gull's egg (observes "BREAKFAST-TABLE") that compared more than favourably with the product of the common hen. At a time when so many of these marine immigrants are making their nests inland, and too often tempt the careless to offer them food which should have been reserved for human consumption, is it too much to ask the Government to organize forage-parties (wearing, of course, a special uniform) to seek out their nests and so supplement a much-needed part of our war-time dietary rich in essential vitamins wasted hitherto from lack of organization, and at the same time exceedingly palatable? I have also eaten with relish at various times and places the eggs of the scissor-bill, the kittiwake, the merganser, the sociable grosbeak, the cow-bird, the boat-bill stork, the whimbrel, the pelican and the smew. . . .

SIR,—The mobilization of our untapped resources will never be fully completed until we appoint an official to examine the work, conduct and conversation of each man and woman throughout every day of the year. How much is wasted in the larder, how many hours of slacking and absenteeism occur, how much useless spending takes place, and how many idle words are uttered merely because the culprit has not beside him at all hours a watcher to exhort, advise and if necessary write a full report on any failure to follow the directions of the Government? There must be many like myself willing to take up such duties at a moment's notice, without a thought of their own inconvenience and for a very moderate salary.

Yours faithfully,

ALL HANDS TO THE WHEEL.

EVOE.

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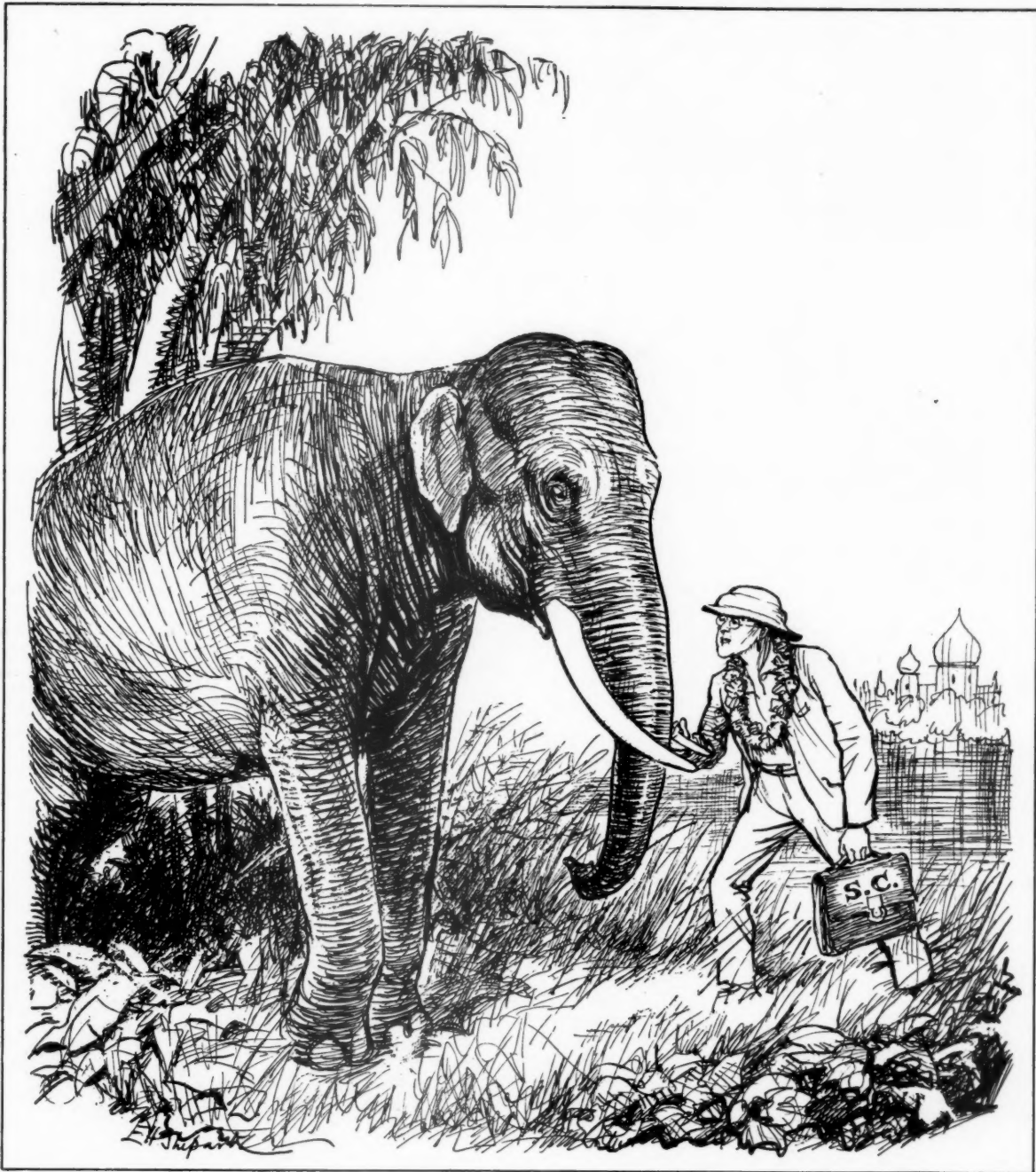
Missed Opportunity

SOMEHOW I think we made a big mistake That time when we walked in the spring twilight. It was warm, I remember, and very clear, And you stuck a primrose behind your ear, And there was some sort of tree in blossom—white, Reflected in the fly-dotted edge of the lake.

Somehow something tells me we missed the bus. The moment is gone now, it is past recall; But we walked there, in the sweetest scented breeze, And I spoke, I know, at some length of evacuees, And you of the maps you had pinned with flags to your wall.

I think, my friend, more than this was expected of us.

V. G.



MOWGLI'S BROTHERS

"Baloo the bear is fighting for us, and I have come to you, O Hathi the Wise, to take counsel with you also."
(Rudyard Kipling re-edited.)



Sillince

"What do you think of the situation in Libya?"

Little Talks

GO on. Ask me another.
All right. *"How do you make a Spanish Fox?"*

Blow! I've forgotten. Is it the same as a Spanish Windlass?

It doesn't say so.

I remember. No, I don't. Is it important?

As a matter of fact, it looks pretty futile to me.

Oh, I know. You take a length of spunyarn, untwist it—and twist it up again the reverse way. It's used for seizings.

Correct. *But why not leave it as it was? And still use it for seizings?*

I can't imagine.

What else do you know? Can you make a bowline?

Of course.

And a bowline on the bight?

Sometimes.

What is it for?

It is used for lowering your aunt from an upper window in case of fire.

Wrong. *"It is used for lowering a man from aloft or slinging a man over the ship's side."* What is a Spanish Barton?

A purchase consisting of two single blocks and a hook.

Good. *"Write short notes on the following: a cringle, a becket, a grommet, a stop, a thimble, a gudgeon, a—"*

Hey, stop!

Well?

What beautiful names the old seamen invented!

Yes, but what are they? What is a cringle?

A cringle? A cringle. Well, a cringle is a sort of hole on the edge of a sail.

Not very well expressed. A cringle is "an eyelet worked into the roping of a sail." What is a grommet?

That's another sort of hole, made of rope.

"An endless ring of rope."

That's right. Like a deck-quoit.

What is a gudgeon?

Isn't it some sort of fish?

"Gudgeons are eyes which slip over the pintles." But what are pintles?

Pintles are things which go through gudgeons.

Where do you see them?

On the rudder. Or the stern-post.

Good. *By the way, what is all this about? I mean, why must you acquire all this odd information?*

It's for an exam.—a "refresher" course.

But surely you have been using gudgeons and pintles for years?

Yes. But one forgets the names.

Does it matter?

Yes. Sailors are horrified if you describe a gudgeon as "that round thing." It's about the most literary profession there is. Not only must you do the job properly, you must talk about it properly. The film-folk, for example, can say "O.K. for sound." But you can't imagine anyone saying that the anchor was O.K.

What would it be?

Well, for example, it might be "aweigh," or "atrip," or "a-cockbill," or "a-stay."

What is an anchor when it's "a-stay"?

I forget. But you see the point.

No. It sounds to me like a lot of meaningless mumbo-jumbo.

Oh, no. It shows the extreme precision of the sea. But it must take years to learn the whole vocabulary.

What is a battledore?

Something to do with a capstan.

"It is used to separate the two parts of the cable round the bits."

Well, there you are! Who in the world ever thought of calling that particular thing a battledore? Anyhow, I enjoy going to school again. Yesterday I extracted a square root—the first for thirty years—and it quite took my mind off the Japs.

Do you need square roots for anchor-work?

No; but they pop up in coastal navigation. You remember, of course, about the square on the hypotenuse?

Not a thing.

Nor did I. So I went back to Euclid. It's really a delightful work.

I always thought he was rather a bore—pedantic, self-opinionated—

Oh, but I love his arrogance. The way he says "All right, you ass, if you don't believe that any two sides of a triangle are greater than the third, just imagine that they're not, and see where it gets you!"

He must have been very tiresome in the home.

Well, I think schoolboys have the greatest fun, I must say. Only, all Euclid classes ought to be taken in boats. Because, when you realize that the old hypotenuse helps you to find out which lighthouse that is, it's thrilling.

Yes, the ordinary triangle is a little unsatisfying.

I wonder Walt Disney has never done a Silly Symphony on Euclid. Can't you imagine a dear little isosceles triangle always being chased by a big bad obtuse-angled fellow?

THE LETTER OF THE LAW

YOU obey it by taking care not to burn or destroy Waste Paper. Are you doing your best to obey the spirit of the law too, by finding and putting out for collection every scrap of waste paper you have?

Or an ugly-looking rhomboid? Yes.

By the way, talking of "refreshers," how is your gas?

My gas?

Didn't you do a gas-course once?

Oh, yes. That was years ago.

Well, if you saw a patch of dark-brown oily liquid, what would you do?

"How is a mooring swivel put on?"

Come on! A dark-brown—

How would you "cat" a bower anchor?

Shut up. A dark-brown oily liquid.

What is it?

Diesel oil.

Ass!

Well, I suppose it would be mustard gas—or Lewisite.

Not necessarily. It might be a mere tear-gas—say, K.S.K.

Oh, yes. I remember.

Well, how would you tell?

By the smell.

But have you, in fact, the faintest recollection of the smell of K.S.K.?

If you press the point—no.

Right. Well, now, suppose you see two blisters—one round and the other elliptical? What causes which?

I know. One's mustard and the other's Lewisite—

Yes—but which?

And one you prick because it's got strychnine in it—

Arsenic?

Arsenic. The other you don't. Or perhaps it's the other way round.

I see. Now about First Aid. Can you briefly explain the circulation of the blood?

I was never able to explain the circulation of the blood.

Have you the faintest idea where the femoral artery is?

At the back of the neck.

I suggest that you too might well have a refresher course.

There may be something in what you say. But what are gudgeons?

Those round things on the rudder.

And what is a Spanish Fox?

I forget.

A. P. H.

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He Who is Strong of Heart

HE who is strong of heart

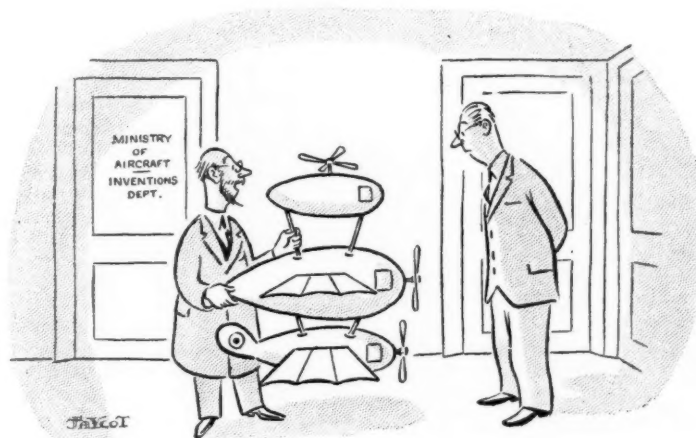
And has an equal wit,
Let him gird on his sword and start
To save the world with it.

He who is tempest-wise

And has an instant plan,
Let him now read those angry skies
And steer the soul of man.

He who is merciful

And has a gift to give . . .
May He now trouble this dark pool
That so the world may live.



"Do not make the mistake of confusing this with an ordinary plane."

On the Alert

"WHAT's that?" Upfoot asked.
 "That's the crash all-clear," said Cogbottle.
 "But surely that's definitely a cuckoo sound."
 "No, it's just that the two notes didn't begin absolutely simultaneously. Your ear keeps them apart, as it were. What one might call an aural illusion. . . . There'll be another crash warning soon and then you can see the difference."

Upfoot looked at the grey sea and the grey sky. "How do you know there'll be another—?"

"Oh, sure to be. This is just the sort of day they come in from the sea and hopefully drop something through the cloud. Besides, the general alert hasn't gone yet. If there was an enemy plane about to justify the sounding of the crash warning, and it stayed long enough to make the warning last as long as that, depend on it Fighter Command will soon be deciding there ought to be a . . . There you are."

The distant note of a siren was just audible.

"The nearer ones will be going in a minute," Cogbottle said.

Upfoot listened a little longer and said "But that's an all-clear. A general all-clear. There must have been a general alert. How could we have missed that?"

"Odd," said Cogbottle, listening intently. "Yes, it's an—*Yes, it's an all-clear all right,*" he bellowed, for they were just getting near the school building on the tower of which the nearest siren was fixed, and it had just started to sound.

They were walking past the school by the time the siren

ran down and it was possible to speak normally again. Cogbottle stared sternly at the revolving vanes as they spun sighingly to rest and said "I can't make out how we missed that. It might have gone, I suppose, when that bunch of lorries was thundering past. But then . . ." He murmured to himself.

Upfoot said "But they can't sound the cuckoo call on those things, surely?"

"Oh, no," said Cogbottle. "They do the crash warning on factory whistles and hooters. At least it says so in the notices, but even so I don't understand how a cuckoo sound can be produced on them. In any event, of course, it isn't really a cuckoo sound at all."

"Oh, surely," said Upfoot.

"No, it isn't. Some of the things sound a major third and some of them sound a fourth. Cuckoos call a *minor* third. The posters just say 'cuckoo' as a sort of shorthand—the briefest way of conveying the idea of up-and-down notes."

Upfoot said "By the way, I haven't seen one of these posters yet."

"Here's a church," said Cogbottle. "There'll be one on the notice-board outside here."

They paused to read it.

"So the official description is 'imminent danger warning,'" Upfoot observed as they walked on. "Who started calling it 'crash'?"

"I don't know. They've been doing that right from the start, when the only 'crash' warning the general public heard was the bell that used to ring at the station—I mean the L.N.E.R. station. News of that had to get around by word-of-mouth."

"And it did, too, I bet."

"I was able to time it once. It got to a butcher's about a mile away to the north of the station in five minutes, but it took three-quarters of an hour getting half a mile to the south. I suppose nobody happened to be going south, or ringing up."

"But then the all-clear—"

"Oh, nobody used to spread *that*. Not interesting."

A factory whistle in the neighbourhood emitted two or three unmistakable yoo-hoos, and Cogbottle said "There you are. I knew there'd be another . . . You can hear the plane too, for that matter."

They listened to the drone for a few moments.

"Might be two of our fighters," Upfoot suggested.

There was a sudden burst of sharp explosions, and Cogbottle said "If it is I'm not the only one to have made a mistake . . . No, *that* one was a bomb all right. Sounds as if he went for the salvage dump."

After a minute or two the factory whistle started up again.

"It still sounds to me like the cuckoo," Upfoot said.

"Nevertheless," said Cogbottle, "that's the crash all-clear."

There were two more dull heavy bangs. The ground quivered.

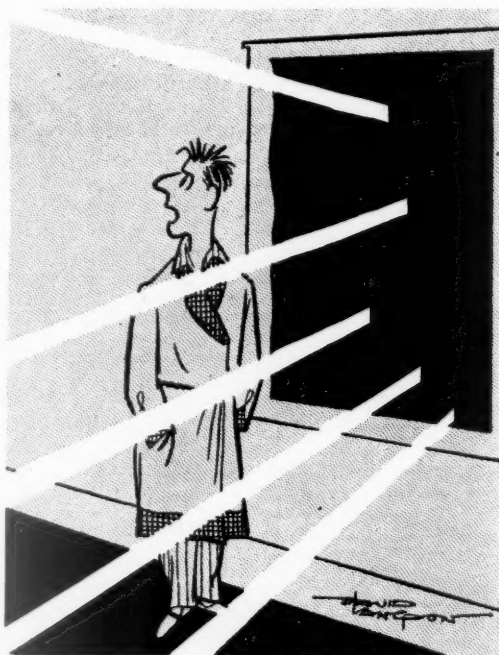
"There's the general alert," said Upfoot suddenly, his head on one side.

Cogbottle listened. "No. That's a general all-clear again." The nearer siren scooped up to its top note and corroborated this statement. "We missed *another* general alert. What's going on?"

A heavier explosion than all the earlier ones shook the whole neighbourhood.

"Ah, well," Upfoot said.

R. M.



"I'm afraid the warden was right about our black-out last night, dear."

Embarras de Richesse

IT is a solemn occasion to enter for the first time the portals of the Metropolitan Library.

One step within its precincts and the waters of Lethe close over the soul. The world fades: no more the trivial laugh, the idle tear; forgotten in a trice the hunt for gin, the scarcity of lip-stick; gone as if for ever the desire to outshine, the urge to impress; sophistication remains a phantom, smartness a bubble; cocktail and scent-spray, backgammon and orchid, the night-club, the American Bar are as unsubstantial as a dream.

Hastily pulling on my glove to hide too carmine a finger-tip and surreptitiously setting my hat at a more dowdy angle, with what air of erudition I could muster I passed humbly through the gloomy vestibule. Here age and dust reigned honourably, to be shabby held prestige, money and notoriety cut no ice, learning filled every dim and musty corner, time and the war stood still.

How stately mahogany was to be sure! How it twinkled in the blazing firelight, shiny panels brushed past by heaven knew how many well-informed coats, chairs polished by the occupation of generations of studious trousers! The portraits of the poets looked down from the walls, busts of the giants of literature frowned from the dark corners. I had only to put out a hand and history was mine, art and philosophy lay within my reach; I could run the back of my hand along the sages of antiquity.

I wandered among a labyrinth of narrow passage and stair. As far as the eye could see were books—books lining the walls, books receding far into the distance, books leading to more books, shelf upon shelf, row upon row, case upon case, vista upon vista, down every corridor, up every step, round every corner, behind, before, above, below, seen giddily through the slatted iron staircase, darkly through the grating of the floors, books fading into books, books lost in an unexplored gloom.

I stood still. I was leaning against a million books, close in front of me the other side of the alley were a million more. Putting out a hand I took one; making what haste I could I regained the hall; handing my volume to a gentle savant and blindly scribbling an initial in his proffered ledger I pushed open the heavy swing door and was outside. I stood still and looked a little ruefully at my treasure trove. It was *The Story of the Three Bears*.



"If only they'd tell us all what to do."

Plashing

WHEN times were bad,
not long ago,
we let the hedges
spread and grow:
for we could never
spare the cash
to pay for men
to go and plash.

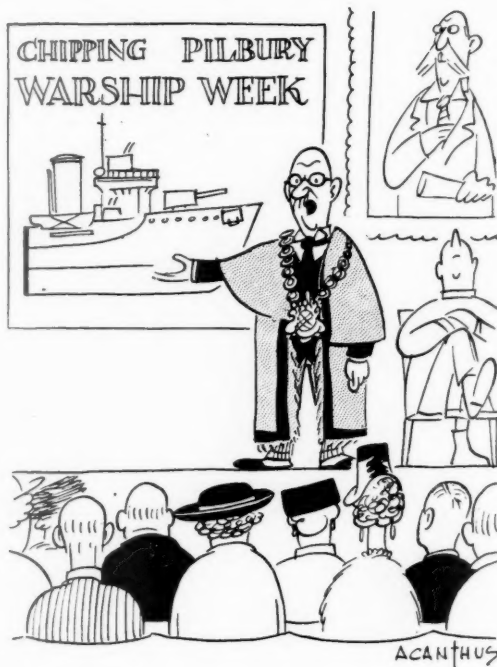
And things were bad
a longish time:
the land lacked labour,
cake and lime.
Aye, how we lived
I never knew—
and all the time
the hedges grew.

They grew and spread
across the fields—
no wonder we
could get no yields.

We made excuses—
sounding cheap—
and said they sheltered
beast and sheep.

But we would have
no idle man
this year when
the snow began:
we've plashed the hedges—
chopped them low—
to give more room
for corn to grow.

And, more than room,
we've given air
to acres that
were always bare.
By knife and crowbar,
brawn and hand,
we've let the sun
get at the land!



"This time we want to raise the cost of the other half."

Still On Duty

THESE boots were built by masters of their art,
Of what true leather once could claim to be;
Finished with craftsman's pride in every part
Fitting as though their grace had grown on me:
My only pair, for in that golden past
Such individual boots were made to last.

Indulgent Fortune with those noble boots
Produced the war's best batman for their care,
Making me envied of all fellow-Loots
And driving even Generals to despair,
Thanks to the mellow lustre they took on,
While, but a shrinking subaltern, I shone.

As though he came with knighthood's stirrup-cup,
Before parade a polisher he brought
To give perfection one more rubbing-up,
Soothing my mare's impatience as he wrought.
With spurs and spur-chains dazzling back the light
I was—knee-high at least—a splendid sight.

So jealous of our comradeship were we,
My batman, I his bloke, and my best mount,
A sensitive bright chestnut, fifteen-three
(Quite tall, that means, as men enlightened count)—
So conscious of those boots and their renown
That never once one let the others down.

I "had a leg"—their slimness proves it—then,
But now I'm full of years and, as is true
Of other ripened and well-nourished men,
My calves have grown a certain fullness too,
Besides, I wear what Home Guard stores supply,
And what are field-boots to such P.B.I.?

So now the girl who does our milk-round wears,
To drive a motor—ah, the pang will pass!—
The boots in which a Gunner put on airs;
And they become her better, bless the lass!
Milk's more than milk when, even scant or late,
My boots, still serving, bring it to the gate!

W. K. H.

Soap, Shaving, Sparta, Etc.

HOW do they decide about this coupon business?" asked someone. "I mean, who says that so much soap is enough for one week, and how much soft soap is the equivalent of a bar of yellow and so on?"

"It's all done on a *per contra* basis," said Snape, who is in the Ministry of Fat.

"Talk sense," suggested Ferguson.

"Well, suppose you take the amount of toilet soap a man uses for ablutionary purposes—"

"Washing himself," I explained.

"—per week and call that Unit A, and Unit B is the amount of soap flakes required for household laundering over the same period—"

"You're begging the whole question," objected Ferguson.

"The point is how much soap *does* a man use a week. It depends on how often he washes and how hard and what kind of soap and water he uses. I remember a cake of soap in a little tumbledown cottage in Derbyshire—"

"Keep it for your autobiography," said Snape rudely. "Naturally one has to make tests and strike an average."

"I know," I said. "You get three men, one very clean and shiny, one middling and one just plain dirty, and you lock them up for a week in a room with h. and c. and one piece of soap each. Only first of all you put each piece of soap into a glass full of water and you catch the water that overflows and weigh it."

"What's the point of that?" asked Ferguson.

"You'll see in a minute. At the end of the week you repeat the process and weigh the overflow again, and then, if you've marked the pieces carefully, you can tell how much soap each man used in a week. To get the average you divide by three."

"I still don't see the point of weighing the water," said Ferguson.

"It's the Principle of Archimedes," I explained. "The weight of a body is equal to the amount of water it displaces."

"Why not just weigh the soap?"

I saw there was nothing to be gained by prolonging the argument, so I simply said: "Have you ever tried weighing soap, Ferguson?"

"Yes," he said. "Have you weighed much water?"

As a matter of fact I haven't weighed any water for years—not since my old scientific days in the school laboratory probably. But when I did weigh it I must say I weighed it pretty accurately. One used to pick up the weights with tweezers, if you remember. Which is more, as I said to Ferguson, than you can do with soap.

He said he didn't see the point of that.



"Now would be a good time to whitewash his stall, Gladys."

"You don't see the point of anything," I said, keeping my temper. "What we are trying to do is to find out how the soap ration is arrived at. If you would try to be a little more constructive, instead of interrupting with stupid, nagging, third-rate—"

"Interrupting!" said Ferguson. "I like that. Who interrupted me when I was trying to tell you about my cottage in Derbyshire?"

"Snape," I said.

"Snape?" said Ferguson, rather taken aback. "So it was. What do you mean by it, Snape, you infernal Civil Servant?"

"I think I've got it," said Snape, writing busily in a notebook. "If you allot one point to toilet soap, two to flaked soap and two and a half to yellow, then over a period of four weeks—"

"What about shaving soap?" said Ferguson.

"Shaving soap isn't rationed," I pointed out.

"Exactly," said Ferguson. "Shaving soap isn't rationed. Whatever else happens we must go on shaving. The Empire may go to its doom, but at least let it be said of it that its corpse was clean-shaven to the last man. Are the Japanese so meticulous? Do you suppose the Russians were smooth-chinned when they took Mojaik? Ugh! It makes me tired."

"The Spartans," I reminded him, "combed their hair at Thermopylae. And nobody thought the worse of them for that."

"Ah!" said old Mottram, who always comes to life at a classical allusion. "The Spartans! I wish we had their spirit in this country to-day. They used to have their entrails eaten by foxes and never utter a word. You'll find the story in Herodotus."

"Thucydides," said Snape.

"Are you seriously suggesting, Mottram," said Ferguson, "that it would further the war effort if we all went and had

our stomachs consumed by foxes? We may be taking things a bit too easy, some of us, but there's no need to rush to the opposite extreme and start behaving like a lot of ruddy Bulgarians."

I said I didn't see the point of that.

"And why the gratuitous insult for the Bulgarians?" added Snape. "We're not at war with them, you know."

"Not at war with Bulgaria!" shouted Ferguson. "You'll be telling me we're not at war with Hungary next."

"Hungary?" said Snape musingly, "Hungary? I don't recollect going to war with Hungary, do you, Mottram?"

Mottram said Yes, he remembered it well, because it was the day some shirts of his that had got lost at the laundry were returned to him by a man called Pebble. R. A. Pebble. Lived somewhere down Oxted way, Mottram thought.

Quite a nasty argument sprang up after this, and in the end we had to have a show of hands. There voted: For the proposition that we were at war with Bulgaria 2; Against 2. On the other hand 2 to 1 were in favour of our being at war with Hungary, one refraining. The only thing to do seemed to be to wake Jamieson up and let him decide.

"At war with Bulgaria?" he said. "No. Not even a state of non-belligerency as far as I'm aware." But he blotted his copybook rather by saying we weren't at war with Hungary either, which made it 50-50 on the minor issue.

"You know it's pretty disgraceful," began Ferguson. "Here we are, five middle-aged—not to say elderly," he said, looking at Mottram—"educated men and we don't know who we are at war with and who we aren't at war with. I call it—"

"With whom," said Mottram, mildly, "with whom."

"With whom, what?" said Ferguson.

"Or else leave out the word 'educated,'" said Mottram.

"Oh, go and throw yourself in a barrel of boiling oil," said Ferguson.

"Ferguson wants to weigh the overflow, Mottram," I explained.

This brought us back to soap again, and Snape at once suggested that we should go to bed. There voted: For the motion, 4; against, nil. Jamieson, who was asleep again, did not vote.

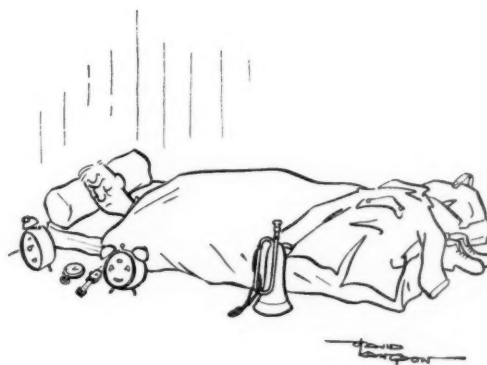
H. F. E.

o o

"Gene Tunney stars as the supposedly half-caste daughter of a rich Arab trader, and opposite her plays Bruce Cabot, as a hard-headed colonial administrator."

Film Notice in Coventry Paper.

Who's the referee?





"... some footlin' nonsense about a right-of-way or something . . ."

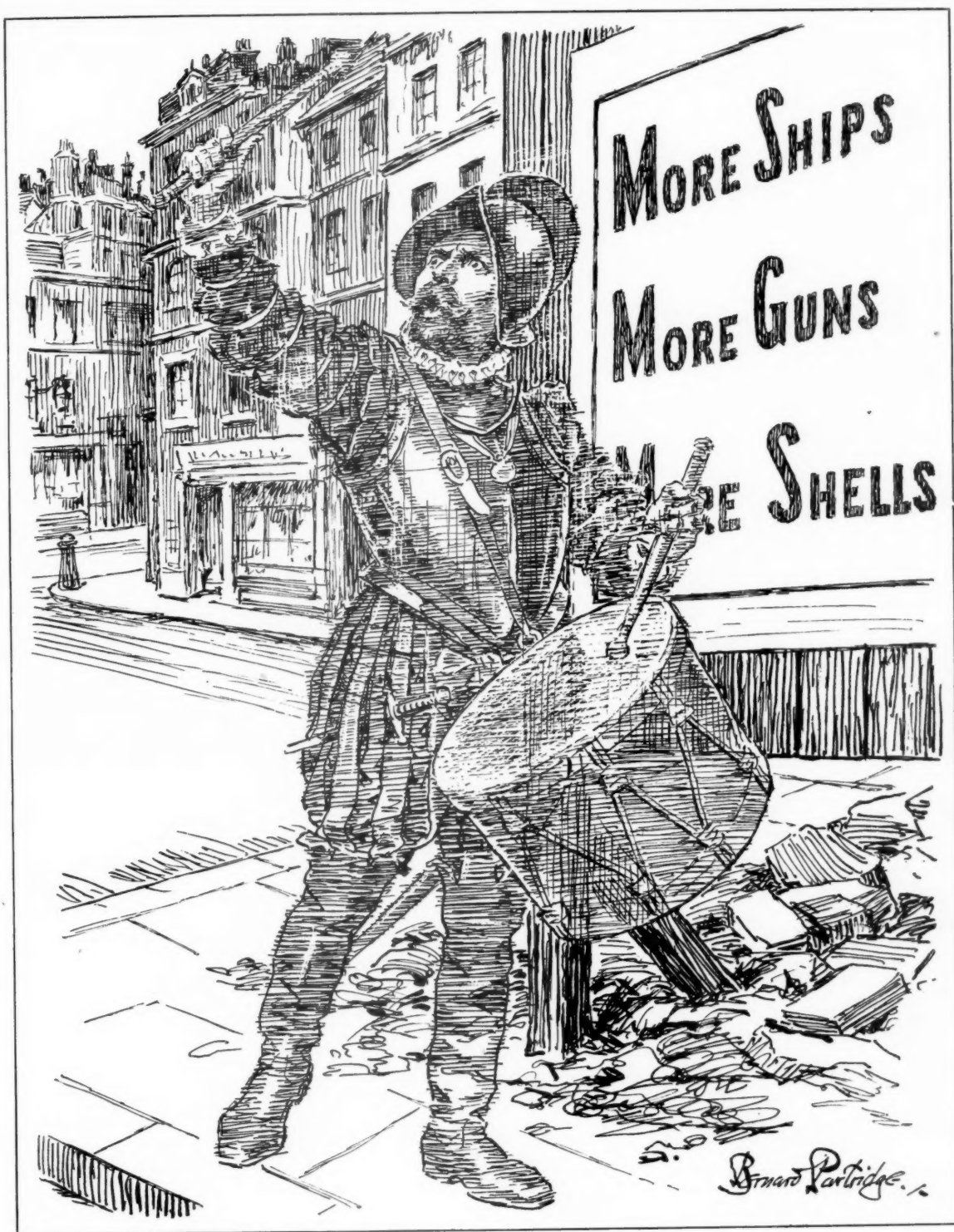
Thoughts on Leave

I DO not find my London changed,
As I was warned I should—
Some railings borrowed for a time,
Some buildings gone for good;
But, in the main, old London still
Has laughter, life and song.
"Business as usual" is the cry . . .
And yet I sometimes long
To stroll down Regent Street one day
Without saluting all the way!

I do not find my cigarettes
Impossible to buy.
They nearly always give me some
In any shop I try:
Sunday—a box of *Kensington*:

Monday—some *Golden Goose* :
Yesterday—twenty *Ship Ahoy* :
To-day—ten *Sunset* (loose) . . .
And yet, I long to smoke once more
Some brand of which I've heard before!

I do not find my leisure pall,
Nor do I, I confess,
Keep yearning for the Barrack Square
And moping for the Mess.
They told me I'd grow tired of Town,
And they were wholly wrong:
I do not miss the old routine . . .
Although I sometimes long
To waken up (with morning tea)
And find my buttons cleaned for me!



DRAKE'S WARNING

Impressions of Parliament

Business Done

Tuesday, March 17th.—House of Lords: Honourable Mention for the Home Guard.

House of Commons: More Rationing—Less Rations.

Wednesday, March 18th.—House of Lords: A Maiden Bow and a Maiden Speech.

House of Commons: Discussion on Agriculture.

Thursday, March 19th.—House of Commons: Suppression?

Tuesday, March 17th.—Whoever in the Government favours the famed if discredited policy of the late *Mr. Wilkins Micawber*, Mr. HUGH DALTON, President of the Board of Trade, does not. So far from waiting for something to turn up, he shocked the House by ordering that the time-honoured "turn-ups" of men's trousers are to go for the duration.

With the knowledge in their minds that the Budget is yet to come, most M.P.s applauded the further decision to reduce the number of pockets permitted on men's clothes. Clearly part of the Government's policy of cutting out all redundant and unnecessary items.

Mr. DALTON is so jovially bull-like in his oratorical tones and methods that his announcements of cuts in this and that sounded almost pleasant.

Clothes are to be cut by about a quarter, with the usual complications about the number of coupons that can be used now, and the number that can't, and the date when those that can be used are available, and . . . Members just nodded resignedly, cheered a little, and trusted to their outfitters to know how it all worked.

"Fortress economics," Mr. DALTON called it. And he went on to add cuts in electricity and gas to the reduction in coal his able assistant, Mr. DAI GRENFELL, Mines Secretary, had ordered that morning.

"Cold comfort," one Member jested, when the President assured the House that all this would put us further on the road to victory. But there were general (rather determined) cheers all the same, and the policy had the obvious approval of the House. Mr. GRENFELL mentioned that the aim was to save up about 20,000,000 tons of coal for the winter, and a House grown used to such immense figures absently murmured "Agreed!"

Another piece of rule-tightening came from Mr. GEOFFREY LLOYD, Petroleum Secretary, who, replying to Major MONTAGUE LYONS, promised

in the matter of petrol rations. The Major, who played a big part in the campaign to cut down pleasure-motoring, nodded approvingly when the Minister added that the new rules would mean the end of pleasure-motoring even in hired cars.

Possibly on the principle that there is not much more to cut and that we must, therefore, have little more to lose, the House was in risible mood. There was a perfect screech of laughter when Mr. DAVID KIRKWOOD, that ornament of the Clyde, spoke of "Birmingham and the West of Scotland generally."

Members fairly rolled off their seats in an uncontrollable frenzy of mirth when Mr. KIRBY, referring to Miss ELLEN WILKINSON, of the Home Security Ministry, spoke of "the Good Lady." "Honourable" and "Noble" Ladies are two a penny; "Good" Ladies are something unique (it would seem) in Parliament's annals.

Then Mr. MCGOVERN (also from the Clyde) scored another winner with a suggestion that there should be a special medal for Members of the Government who were conscientious objectors in the last war. Several Ministers obviously thought this excruciatingly funny; several others went red and were not amused. Private Members pleased themselves—mostly loudly.

Mr. WILLIE GALLACHER, casting aside a Communist's dislike of "baubles," suggested medals for Civil Servants who broke the rules or committed acts for which there was no precedent. This got a very hearty "hand," as other branches of the entertainment industry call it.

Considerably less popular was a sudden wave of hostility to the freedom of the Press that swept off his feet (of all people) Sir HERBERT WILLIAMS. A similar fate befell Wing-Commander JAMES, but that was less surprising.

Sir HERBERT apparently wants the word "news" abolished from newspapers. He has several times recently complained aggrievedly that newspapers have printed news, and, urging that Mr. DALTON should find out how the papers got news of clothes rationing, was crisply told that it was probably the intelligent work of an intelligent journalist.

The knight assumed a "There-ain't-no-sich-thing!" expression, and then the Wing-Commander entered the lists with a demand that ex-Ministers should not be allowed to write for the Press. This got what the PRIME MINISTER would call a frosty answer, and Lord WINTERTON administered the *coup de*



AWL

COLLABORATORS

MR. DALTON AND MR. GRENFELL

that "drive yourself" car services should suffer the same cuts and impediments as the private motorist

NO KID GLOVES



AWL

FRONT WINDOW IN WAR-TIME

Lord SELBORNE demands austerity in propaganda.



FAVOURITISM

grâce to the whole thing by asking with bland innocence that, if inquiries were to be made, someone might look into the journalistic achievements of Mr. CHURCHILL when he left Ministerial office in 1929.

In their Lordships' House Lord MANSFIELD had spiky things to say about the pikes with which some Home Guard units have been issued. "Mediaeval nick-nacks," he called them, and asked whether there were any more like them on the way—little things like the halberd, the arbalist, the arquebus, for instance.

No, said Lord CROFT, on behalf of the War Office, with all the calm at his considerable command; no, nothing more was to come. Anyway, pikes were not to be sniffed at when it was a question of pike or nothing. In his best manner, Lord CROFT went on to imply that the Home Guard were so good that it did not greatly matter what arms they bore. The bare hands of good men and true (he hinted) were better than the Tommy guns and grenades of bad men.

Noble Lords cheered, and tried to look credulous.

Wednesday, March 18th. — The Government was in one of its secretive moods to-day.

Mr. ATTLEE announced that there would be no public announcement about the escape of the German battleships through the Channel, under the eyes of the Navy.

Mr. Justice BUCKNILL's inquiry into the matter had reported, but the report was to go into the secret pigeon-holes, and was a matter for future historians.

Mr. HORE-BELISHA was of the opinion that the general public had some slight interest in the war, and that it was not good enough, after each reverse, to say that we had nothing to learn.

Mr. ATTLEE murmured something non-committal, and Mr. HORE-BELISHA suggested that he might be more forthcoming in secret session.

Asked by Admiral BEAMISH whether this was the end of the matter so far as the public are concerned, Mr. ATTLEE said it was. But your scribe would take a small bet that he is wrong.

Lord VANSITTART made his maiden speech in the Lords, on a motion

by Lord ELIBANK. He was plainly nervous, and carried voluminous notes, which he never once consulted. It was an eloquent, well-informed address, pleading for a "realist" attitude about German refugees and pro-German (as distinct from pro-Nazi) propaganda. It was followed by a debate, in which the Government gave assurance that it was as realist as the next man.

Lord BRUNTISFIELD (a title which hid the identity of Sir VICTOR ALEXANDER GEORGE ANTHONY WARRENDER, Bart.) took his seat with due ceremony and with scarlet and ermine. He was escorted by Lord SOULSBY and Lord BROWNLOW, similarly "dolled up." Lord BRUNTISFIELD (who still looks like his own youngest son) then took his place among the Peers, forming a highly-decorative, as well as useful, addition to that distinguished assembly.

Thursday, March 19th.—Mr. HERBERT MORRISON, Home Secretary, announced that the *Daily Mirror* had been given formal warning to be more careful in future in its presentation of views, with a threat of suppression in the background—if not the foreground.

Experiences of a Junior Officer

The Street of a Thousand Adjutants

"AND this," said the Colonel in a tone of disgust, "is the adjutant."

I peered into a room hardly bigger than a cupboard and very dark. It was full of lumber—old umbrellas, stale confectionery, broken golf-clubs and music-stands. In a small space stood an untidily-dressed officer, biting his nails. His tunic was much too small for him, and a space was visible between his collar and shirt. Brass paper-clips dangled from his cuffs. The Colonel shut the door hastily.

Having only just posted myself to the 167th Musketeers, I hardly liked to comment. The Colonel opened another door.

"The adjutant," he said in a cynical tone.

In a very large room a tall thin young man in full-dress uniform sat in an armchair with folded arms. His eyes were closed. The Colonel shut the door with a bang.

I cannot give the exact number of adjutants I saw that morning. It was at least a dozen. At last the Colonel turned to me and said with a sob, "You see how it is. Adjutants, nothing but adjutants. They breed like flies."

He broke off as a gigantic figure loomed over us. It was a lady of about thirty-five wearing full webbing equipment with water-bottle and entrenching tool. She wore two badly rolled gas-capes.

"Lady Jonquil Wincornis, Colonel-in-Chief of the Regiment," whispered the Colonel.

"Good morning, young man. You're the new adjutant, I presume?"

The Colonel opened his mouth in feeble protest. Lady Wincornis waved him aside.

"Nonsense, I won't hear of it! This young man will make an excellent adjutant."

"We already have twenty adjutants," the Colonel muttered. Lady Wincornis flung me four new pips and turned away. The Colonel looked at me with an expression of dumb misery. My heart, always tender, was touched with pity for the poor old man.

"Can't we just ignore the whole thing?" I asked.

The Colonel looked horrified. "She—she'd kill me. It's the same with all our new officers. She makes them all adjutants as soon as she sees them. I——" He broke down and sobbed. It was pathetic to see that once erect military figure doubled up in misery like a deck-chair. After a time he became calmer and opened the door of a room full of empty bottles. There he left me.

Whether I liked it or not, I was an adjutant. Mechanically I fastened on my new pips and settled myself in a rusty arm-chair. But nothing happened. Nobody came in with papers to sign. No intelligence came from G.H.Q. I took up the telephone, but the line was dead.

I lunched with a crowd of adjutants. One or two were boasting of the work they had got through that morning. One, apparently, had received no fewer than two applications for week-end leave. He had rejected both. One had received a prospectus of a tin-mining company posted from British Guiana in 1904. But most, it was clear, had spent the morning just as I had.

I spent an uneventful afternoon in my office. That evening, after dinner, I began to see the disagreeable side of the business. Over a game of dominoes several adjutants came to blows. When the Colonel tried to intervene he was hit over the head with a rusty bottle. Most of the windows

were broken, a mess-waiter had his ear bitten, and one of the adjutants soaked the window-curtains in paraffin and set them on fire. Soon the whole room was blazing furiously. There were the makings of an ugly scene.

As I meditated in my office next day on the woman's whim which had made a mockery of the 167th Musketeers' training programme for 1941, I came to a decision. All this nonsense must stop. In one regiment there was room for only one adjutant. I would be that adjutant.

The first thing to do was to get rid of the others. I put advertisements in the local papers: "ADJUTANTS. A nice lot. Cheap at 25/- a dozen," or alternatively: "You need Adjutants. We have them. Famed for quality for 100 years." In this way I managed to dispose of five or six of the younger ones to greengrocers and seedsmen. What they did with them was no concern of mine. I merely handed over the men and pocketed the cash, giving the Colonel the usual fifteen per cent. commission.

The older adjutants were a tougher proposition. We had one or two of them stunned and shipped to Jamaica in crates of bananas. Two were shot, apparently by accident, on the rifle range. The oldest and toughest of all, growing wary, refused to leave his room. There was only one thing to be done. One dark night the C.O. and myself crept up behind him and choked him with Army Forms B 1883 and G 1268 (Part Two). The hideous deed over, we looked at each other and smiled. The Colonel even put his hand on my shoulder.

At that moment a shadow loomed over us.

"I want to see the Adjutant—all the adjutants," boomed Lady Wincornis. "Where are they? What have you done with them?"

The Colonel went pale. I stepped forward. I had foreseen this. The papers I pressed into Lady Wincornis's hand were neither Army Form C 286 nor D 1017. They were Lady Wincornis's calling-up papers. They called on her to report two days previously at an A.T.S. Training Centre. She was gone in a flash.

I heard later that she was made adjutant of her unit almost immediately.

Nature Notes

THE north wind blows, the skies are filled with snow,
Robins, I fear, will undergo starvation.
(All this of course occurred ten days ago;
The news can now be passed for publication.)

A chaffinch sings upon the orchard bough
(See Browning, R.), warm west winds make him do it.
(This may take place about three weeks from now,
But it's quite legal to look forward to it.)

Meanwhile the patriot can only write—
Disdaining what's to come or what is over—
That hedgerows burgeon, the young sun is bright,
A thrush is singing—in the Straits of Dover.

J. B. N.

Heat

ONE of the things that bother the Army at home is the matter of heat. In theory soldiers are always warm in their billets, because a fixed number of pounds of coal per man per day is allowed, and this has been proved to be quite enough. The War Office is so conscientious about these things that they probably tested it out by giving a retired field-marshal his ration of coal and telling him to go and fry himself. No doubt he reported that he had been able to do so on the allowance, which is, normally, quite adequate.

Unforeseen factors, however, sometimes intervene to prevent our men from being as warm as they would like to be. We were recently billeted, for instance, in the ante-rooms of a large dance-hall, where the heat was provided by hot-water pipes. Directly we arrived Sergeant Green, who is a cold-blooded man in the best sense of the word, sent Sapper Sympson down to light the fire, and as soon as we were at leisure we crowded round the pipes, waiting for them to become warm, so that we could unfreeze our numbed fingers. Nothing happened, and we accused Sapper Sympson of not having lighted the fire properly, which he indignantly denied.

In the end, however, we discovered that we had heated the dance-hall itself, but that the ante-rooms were heated from a different boiler, so that we had used up a week's supply of coal in vain. So we carried our bedding into the dance-hall and retired to rest—having been travelling for thirty-six hours—at about 7 P.M. People coming in for the weekly dance at 8 P.M. were surprised to find the floor cluttered with recumbent figures, but, with the true philosophy of the British soldier, we dressed ourselves again and joined in the dance.

Another snag of course is that our ration of coal doesn't always arrive in time at the right place. In October, for instance, we were billeted at Cragchester, and Lieutenant Vague zealously ordered our coal, which was delivered in November just as we had moved to Lower Bowerby. Luckily at Lower Bowerby the troops who had preceded us there had been obliged to go away before the coal which they had ordered had arrived.

Again, the ration of coal is insufficient if the billet is very high or very large, such as in the disused cinema we occupied at Bumpton. The corporals, sleeping in the shilling seats, were

quite warm, but the sappers in the sixpennies had to sleep in their overcoats, and the drivers in the three-pennies had to wrap themselves in the covers from their trucks.

Lieutenant Vague zealously looked into the matter and discovered that extra coke would be allowed if he wrote up and said that the cubic capacity of the room was above a certain number of feet per man.

Unfortunately he is such a stickler for accuracy that he refused to make a mere guess at the height of the place, and his application was held up while we sought a sufficiently long ladder for the job. What with transporting the ladder seven miles and then getting it stuck for two days in the Emergency Exit, the measuring was quite a long job, and permission to buy the extra coal only arrived after we had moved on to Pockleford.

When we complained about the cold to one officer, a hearty young man of

the cold-bath and P.T. school, he said that we ought to imagine that we were Germans in Russia, with no coal at all. Sapper Sympson, who is good at imagining things, sawed up the front door of the Women's Institute in which we were billeted, but though it made an excellent fire we gathered from Lieutenant Blue's remarks on parade next morning that we had not quite understood his meaning.

o o

From My Armchair

ALL Freedom's at stake. I must do what I can

To ensure that our policy gains trust.
Shall I call for assaults on the Jap and
That Man,
Or a full-scale attack on the Brains
Trust?

o o

"Small errors are more likely to occur frequently than large errors—and hence extremely large errors never occur."—*From a Book on Mathematics for Engineers.*

It's nice to be sure.

The fact that goods made of raw materials in short supply owing to war conditions are advertised in this paper should not be taken as an indication that they are necessarily available for export.



"Forget what I just said about there being no invasion."

At the Diversions

"HAPPIDROME" (PRINCE OF WALES)

WHAT a magnifier is the microphone! Let anyone but coo a jest, croon a ditty, or whisper the news agreeably into that tiny cup and he may count his worshippers by the myriad. Reputations can even be made thereon by no more exacting a process than putting on gramophone records. (America beat this by making an idol of an invisible ventriloquist!) To be the introducer of good things upon the air may seem to be light work. But do it pleasantly, and you are yourself, immediately and ubiquitously, the best of Good News. *Happidrome*, now promoted to West End status, is a case in point. *Mr. Lovejoy* was the master of those weekly ceremonies of the Forces' Programme which accompanied Sunday supper, and because the turns which he so genially announced were of a genial kind, he became as much hungered after at 8 P.M. as if he were a piece of cold salmon.

True, he and his colleagues, *Ramsbottom* the stage-manager, and *Enoch* the "gormless" call-boy, who usually got in the last word as well as a foolish one, were wont to practise some mutual "chipping" and "cracking" as well as to introduce the various singers and clowns of the week. This was, and now in visible shape remains, a simple, elementary form of fun. *Mr. Lovejoy* makes a pun. *Enoch*, a diminutive, pallid, but nimble representative of the Youth Movement, makes a worse one, or interpolates his shrill and famous prelude to sagacity, "Let me tell you," and then *Mr. Lovejoy* begs *Ramsbottom* to remove the unbidable boy.

Mr. Lovejoy (MR. HARRY KORRIS) turns out to be a large and lovable creature, massive and blameless as a piece of Blackpool (peace-time) Rock. *Ramsbottom* (MR. CECIL FREDERICK) exchanges melody and dialogue with the usherette (Miss BUNTY MEADOWS), who has the right kind of sharp, spry craziness in place of the sweeter and more tranquil mischief once admired

in soubrettes. *Enoch* (MR. ROBBY VINCENT) combines a wistful joy in repartee with the wan complexion of a Lancashire cheese.

Plainly this fun would not amount to much if it were not the foreground of a well-contrived landscape. The landscape ranges from Arabia to Argentina, the familiar terrain of revue, but it is lit up and relieved with the fresh tints and considerable taste of clever costumes and decorators working under Mr. ROBERT NESBITT's highly expert direction. The dancing, too, especially of the acrobatic kind, is first-class. The lady member of the MARQUIS TRIO is a model of elasticity and poise, and flies through the air

It is certainly not an entirely new subject. But who in his senses expects musical plays to have new subjects? Playgoers continually prove the triumph of hope over experience by going yet again to the box-office, but they are not so wildly fanciful as to surmise that a musical play called *Blossom Time* will omit to mingle amour of a melodious order with arboriculture in the genial background.

Where too would the musical drama be without a steady supply of penniless but gifted music-masters who dote on their feminine pupils, and are crossed in love, with their great soft hearts bursting (in waltz-time) somewhere about the end of Act II? The shabby music-master in his humble "civvies" must naturally have a rival in the pink and in full plumage, preferably "an Army Captain" with a truant eye for winsome young ladies who are poor but honest, and a very high polish on his boots, buttons and theatrical technique. Only a carping radical would ask for new themes and new measures in this agreeable world of floral far-away, with its abundance of fluting tenors, frogged jackets and petals in the May-time air.

Nobody is better equipped for a central part in this cavalcade of tears and tunes, of horticulture and happiness than FRANZ SCHUBERT. What an

economical hero it is who also writes his own score! So meet yet again the struggling melodist in love with the dancing-master's daughter and watching her love pass to the gay soldier in a shako, less ready with a tune but a better-graced partner at the ball. The scene is Vienna, the date is 1826, there is music (by SCHUBERT and others) as well as blossom in the air, and Mr. RICHARD TAUBER, in snuff-colour and spectacles and full of shy, music-masterly charm, is there as a highly vocal centre-piece for the old, old story which Mr. RODNEY ACKLAND retells.

The "book" might cater more for laughter. Miss MARGARET YARDE and Mr. JOHN DEVERELL are there to amuse, she in her most overflowing vein as a landlady and he with the tremulous tip-toe style of a local Mantalini. But nothing much has



CHARLADIES STEAL THE THUNDER.

Stage Manager MR. CECIL FREDERICK
The Proprietor MR. HARRY KORRIS

with the greatest of ease, while the KELLAWAYS, as the *Terrible Turks*, toil and spin to wonderful effect.

Then there are the FOUR CHARLADIES who go discreetly mad among the mops and buckets and play everything by turns, from the harp to the fool, in a happy-go-lucky moonstruck way.

"HUTCH" sings soothingly and Miss TESSIE O'SHEA does not so much take the stage as dive-bomb it with her imposing physique and personality. Her songs are not all as good as her means of propelling them, but she has the whizz-bang style of the senior music-hall and ejects high spirits as a Tommy-gun its bullets. I. B.

"BLOSSOM TIME" (LYRIC)

"AN Entirely New Play, with Music," says the programme, introducing SCHUBERT in floral circumstance.



"If I could live my life over again I'd use last month's points differently."

been arranged to exercise their talents. At least the text scarcely seems to provide any humour of striking freshness. Did a hint lie behind the decorators' whim of filling the Viennese street-scene with so many chestnuts? It is understandable that they would wish Herr SCHUBERT to have a change from lilac. But chestnuts? Was it kind to say it thus with flowers?

The accent, as they say, is on youth—youth sighing and singing its way through an old and truly floral Vienna in which it was still permissible to pull authority's leg and even to laugh at the police. Mr. TAUBER plays and sings with a reticent charm as the good *Franz Schubert*; his style shows less display than it had when first he conquered the town, and his *Franz* is a modest and likeable as well as a richly melodious creature. Miss LEUEEN MACGRATH is prettily wan and wistful as his *Vicki*, and Miss HELLA KURTY brings a lively, dark, bewitching talent to the soubrette's part. Mr. NEAL ARDEN is handsomely the "Army

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID:

"NEVER in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."

That famous and well-deserved tribute to the prowess and devotion of British airmen serves as a fitting reminder of the debt we owe to them. We can never repay them for all they have done and are doing for us, but through the PUNCH COMFORTS FUND we are able to meet some of their needs. Will you please help us in the good work by sending a contribution? Donations will be gratefully received and acknowledged by Mr. Punch at PUNCH COMFORTS FUND, 10 Bouverie Street, London, E.C.4.

Captain" of the captivating eye and uniform.

On the whole this is a civilized entertainment which pleasantly takes the ear and often the eye as well. The story would be better for a few more flowers of speech, but the atmosphere of blossom in general is ample and fragrant. I. B.

Pleasant Sunday Afternoon

"Bletchley branch of the Communist Party devoted Sunday meeting to the opening of a second European front, not to ease the Red Army, but to achieve victory within a measurable period."—*Bucks Paper*.

"We opened our first Youth Centre in 1812. Now, in 1942, we are welcoming a new generation."

Advt. in "Methodist Recorder."

Already?

"Will Widow Lady with egg in Rusthall 'bus Tuesday communicate with lady."

Advt. in Kent Paper.

Somebody with a spare rasher?

Our Booking-Office

(By Mr. Punch's Staff of Learned Clerks)

Farming Without Tears

A CRAFT so traditional as the farm-labourer's naturally lacks text-books—it is handed down from father to son. If the novice who arrives on the farm from the remotest periphery of farming circles wishes (in the somewhat ungallant words of Mr. A. G. STREET's preface) "to become a real help instead of continuing an expensive nuisance," he or she might do worse than study the text and diagrams of that admirable little primer *A Book of Farmcraft* (LONGMANS, 5/-). Can you handle a shovel, a pitch-fork, a hoe, a hay-knife or a bagging-hook? If so, how? There is a right way and a wrong way. Have you ever filled a sack from a bushel measure? Can you set up hurdles for a sheep-pen without splitting the stakes? What about milking cows, weaning calves, catching, harnessing and shutting-in cart-horses, not to mention a close acquaintance with mowers, binders, elevators and tractors? Mr. MICHAEL GREENHILL and Miss EVELYN DUNBAR do not profess to give you an advanced course with tractors—tractors have volumes to themselves. In fact they might have omitted machinery altogether—possibly for a second volume—in favour of more traditional crafts such as hedge-laying and ditching.

H. P. E.

The Old Lady

It is a curious thing that a liberty-loving nation should be so fond of tyrannical old women. Yet, with the single exception of *Lady Catherine de Bourgh* (possibly because she was a little too life-like), a long line of fictitious old ladies has been taken to our hearts for the simple reason that they would have their own way. Can it be, one wonders, a form



"If it's got a stitch dropped the fourth row up, it's one that I knitted."

of homage, indirect and perhaps half-unconscious, to the august figure established like a rock on the hearthrug at Balmoral? In *The Aunt of England* (HUTCHINSON, 8/6) Mr. COSMO HAMILTON supposes a still older ancestry. His *Duchess of Hampshire* may continue to flourish in the Victorian world (the time of the story is 1860), but her character was formed by the Georgian. Neither in act nor in speech is she squeamish, and the last lover was abandoned only when she became the friend of the Queen. Nevertheless, she did her duty and provided England with such an array of governing sons, nephews, cousins and grandsons as to earn her nickname from Mr. Punch himself. Her present exploit, however, is hardly worthy of her, being merely the attempt to prevent a favourite granddaughter from marrying an ineligible young man. Not, you see, a very novel novel, though Mr. HAMILTON calls in the influence of the STANLEYS and Miss NIGHTINGALE to support the rebel; but it has the vivacity and the "situations" of the play on which it is based, and the character of the old *Duchess* lends it a rich, humorous and effective illusion of vitality. Hardly less curious than the heroine is the manner in which the book is written—an odd, uneasy, jerky manner that almost leads the reader to mistake lack of grace for lack of ideas. J. S.

The Best of Both Worlds

In the seventies of last century, when English-speaking Americans were beginning to doubt whether the influx of so much Central Europe was good for them, one *Philip Marston*, ship-owner, not only made a point of engaging hopeful foreign workmen, but personally supervised the careers of two orphan Bohemian lads. His only son *John* grew up with *Jan Pisek* and *Anton Karel*; and *Jan* stayed to help *John* build and run *Windswept* (COLLINS, 9/6) after *Philip's* untimely death. "*Windswept*," a lonely farmhouse on the Maine coast, stands for those roots in American soil that *John* wisely desired for his children, though he himself became a translator of works of international importance. These two cults, the regional and the world-wide, with three generations of their American devotees, are the staple of Miss MARY ELLEN CHASE's stimulating if unequal novel. Her Czechs are admirable; but a French incursion, headed by an incredibly unstable Reverend Mother and her erratic niece, introduces an almost nightmare element into a book whose romantic sobriety is its outstanding charm. Romantic sobriety scores, however, in *Mrs. Haskell*, skipper's daughter and domestic martinet at "*Windswept*," an American portrait of real distinction in the traditional New England manner.

H. P. E.

Background to the Ballet

That the art of ballet consists in the perfect fusion of music, dance and painting, and that its guiding principle is music is the theme of ALEXANDRE BENOIS' book *Reminiscences of the Russian Ballet* (PUTNAM, 21/-). M. BENOIS has probably had more influence on the recent history of ballet in Europe than any other man, and his book is of the greatest interest. He describes the artistic surroundings of his childhood in the St. Petersburg of the late nineteenth century, and the formation of the circle of artists, of whom he was the leader, who first conceived the *Ballets Russes*. We read of DIAGHILEFF from his first appearance in St. Petersburg as a provincial of uncultivated tastes, as editor of the *World of Art*, and as the great and despotic impresario whose artistic flair and business ability made the *Ballets Russes* a reality. M. BENOIS describes the creation of many famous productions and his own part in them, and incidentally adds another shade of mystery to the question of the authorship of the "book"



Adjutant (discovering second button of tunic unfastened). "DASH IT ALL, SERGEANT-MAJOR! HERE'S A FELLAH HALF NAKED! MAKE HIM A PRIZ'NAR!"

L. Raven Hill, March 31st, 1909

of the greatest ballet of all—*Petrouchka*. STRAVINSKY has said that the idea was his, and was worked out by himself and DIAGHILEFF; DIAGHILEFF claimed that it originated with him; and now M. BENOIS says that, while the idea of the coming to life of the puppet was STRAVINSKY'S, "the subject of the drama, the characters and development of the action were mine." However that may be, never in the history of ballet have three minds had so brilliant and successful a single thought. Like all good "theatre," everything in this fascinating book is slightly larger than life—the ecstasies and despairs; the ferocious quarrels and tearful reconciliations; slights, sulks and forgivenesses; promises, leading ever to fresh "betrayals"; but it is a book which no lover of the ballet should miss. D. C. B.

A Philosopher in Love

Spenlove, ship's engineer, has been to Mr. WILLIAM MCFEE what *Marlow* was to CONRAD—an observer of life, a sympathetic philosopher, and a teller of other people's stories. In *Spenlove in Arcady* (FABER, 10/6) there is presented a new and wholly agreeable side of his character. This is the sailor home from the sea, the observer stripped

of his detachment and plunged into action important to himself. In order to arrive at fulfilment, of course, your philosopher need not necessarily spend his time with his own kind. This one, for instance, finds in the midst of a second-rate society in America a happiness as indubitable as it is unorthodox. Original and genuine men attract to themselves what is original and genuine in others, and from the moment of *Spenlove's* first meeting with *Mrs. Ducroy* it is only a matter of time before they throw in their lots together. In this sense it is a story rather than a drama. Yet the certainty of the happy ending, rare in serious modern novels, cannot lessen the interest of the preliminary activity. *Spenlove* and his lady are the only constants in a world of flux, of magazine writers and the febrile pounding of their typewriters, of the self-enriched and fantastically spendthrift, of Hollywood "big money" and New England small talk. Nothing in this—not a misunderstood husband, or the sailor's distrust of emotion, or *Mrs. Ducroy's* weakness, now and then, for strong drink—can prevent the conjunction of the man who thought himself too old to marry and the woman who thought she was too disillusioned to marry again. Without sacrificing the nature of his sailor, Mr. MCFEE has given him a perfect complement. J. S.

Armchair Adventures

THE war years have brought two major changes into my existence. I have had to bring my family some five hundred miles from home into conditions of comparative discomfort, and to exchange my normal brand of tobacco for a savage-looking plug. These two circumstances have combined, I suppose by way of natural compensation, to introduce me to a thrilling and profitable occupation for my scanty leisure time.

It was inevitable that sooner or later the pen-knife I use for operations on the plug should slip from my trouser-pocket into the recesses of my armchair. My hand automatically followed it. But the route, unlike the corresponding one down my pet chair at home, was no easy one for a human hand. The obstacles included a fiercely-sprung bottle-neck and a sharp double bend across the line of greatest resistance of the knuckles.

At last, however, I grasped the knife, and as I did so I felt something else—a coin. My mind was filled at once with base speculations. Was the coin mine already, or just coming into my possession for the first time? Was it a florin or a penny? Current or obsolete? These questions were not resolved without some agony. The difficulties of the unencumbered descent were as nothing compared with those of the return under full cargo. But when I succeeded in bringing the coin to light it proved that my efforts had been worth while. It was a half-crown—an old Victorian model, black with age and unquestionably pure profit. I felt that I was sitting on a gold-mine and blessed my unknown benefactor.

Filled with elation, I plunged in my hand at a new point where the going happened to be easier, shot the corners in great style, and was rewarded by a vicious and painful bite. At first I could not think what had bitten me.

On the face of it a snake seemed the likeliest possibility, but I could not help thinking that a nest of, say, asps would have been spotted before by my family; and as far as I could recall the house was singularly free from all reptiles. Though somewhat comforted by these reflections, I withdrew the hand with all speed and took it to the doctor for examination. He diagnosed a pin-prick and forbade further researches for a fortnight while he kept the wound under observation. It festered, calmly and naturally, and then as calmly unfestered again.

I now realized that there was a definite balance of profit and loss to be drawn in my new amusement: that sacrifices as well as rewards must be expected. But somehow this consideration served to raise the whole thing to a higher moral plane and merely intensified my enjoyment.

A cautious reconnaissance at the end of the fortnight revealed that the villain was a thin sharp staple used, I understand, for fastening miniature antimacassars to the arms of chairs. A deadlier hazard could hardly be imagined, and the cavities turned out to be full of these things, the fruits of generations of careless solicitude for the upholstery. I now have a pile of six or seven dozen excellent specimens. In amassing this vast collection I have been driven to the doctor only three times, though the fingers of both hands bear numerous small scars which serve

as a constant warning against rashness. Against these debits I can show a variety of assets: two and tenpence in cash, three pairs of scissors—one of which will cut paper, four combs, nine hair-pins, a tin whistle and a most interesting pamphlet on Air-Raid Precautions.

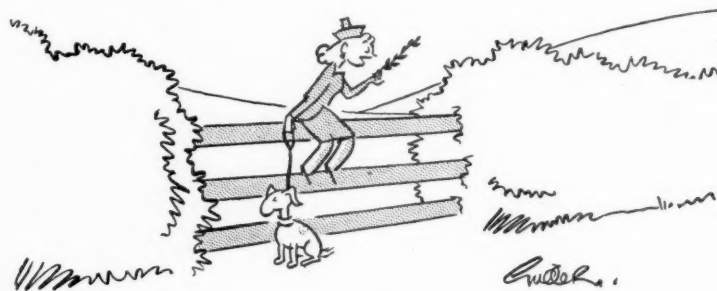
And even then the tale is not complete. Yesterday I attacked once more a corner of the chair which had previously defied my efforts, a point where a rat-trap must, perhaps by accident, have been incorporated in the upholstery. Indomitable perseverance at last forced an entry and I discovered without surprise that no previous penetration had been made. Or wait—what was that? A thin object was lodged in the very furthest corner. I managed to grip it between two fingers, drew it gently upwards to the jaws of the trap—and stuck. Try as I might, I could move no further.

The chair had to be cut open before the hand could be extricated, and suffered some inevitable damage in the process. The hand itself was severely crushed, though X-ray photographs have shown that no bones were broken, and the doctors seem to think it will be fit for use in a couple of months, in good time for me to begin operations on the second chair this summer.

And the prize? The thin object which has rendered all these little troubles insignificant?

It was a *match*. A genuine pre-war wax vesta, in perfect condition.

I shall never use it. It will join my small hoard of treasures too priceless to be consumed for the pleasure of a moment. It will certainly rank above the onion I found among the hyacinth bulbs last autumn, and only just below the half-box of cigarettes I received as prize for winning the Fathers' Race at my daughter's school in the first summer of the war when hardly any fathers could turn up.



"Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor, airman, warden, fire-watcher, spy . . ."

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